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ABSTRACT

The meaning of independence, or freedom, in the culture of the Luba, an African ethnic group in Zaire, is inextricably linked to fundamental rights, the development of personal qualities, and the choices that the individuals make. The rights of a Luba man are based on legitimate membership in his family, his lineage, and his chiefdom. A free man is a strong man, a hard worker, a provider, and a family builder. He is animated with the spirit of achievement and enjoys freedom of action in his undertakings. He is also a creator of wealth who enjoys its rewards. However, even though individuals have fundamental rights, their enjoyment of those rights in some instances may be either deferred or otherwise limited. Freedom is the ability to stand with others and, together, face hardship with courage; to be a contributor rather than a liability to society; and to pursue the common good. Because of this philosophy and its many manifestations in the lives of the Luba, independence and the spirit of community appear to be coterminus. A six-item list of references is included. (Author/FMW)

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Independence and the Spirit of Community

Tshilemalema Mukenge

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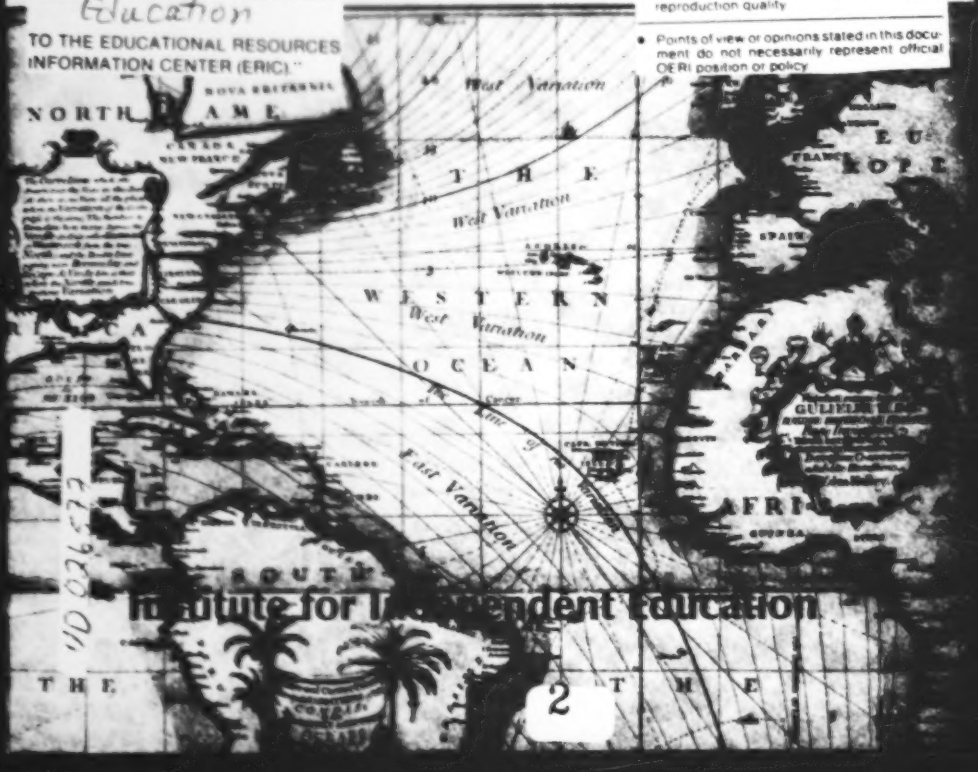

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COVER: Excerpt from a chart developed in 1700 by Edmund Halley, the English astronomer and geographer. It was used by navigators on ships bringing Africans to the Americas. *(Source: U.S. Library of Congress)*

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Independence and the Spirit of Community

Tshilemalema Mukenge

The concept of independence or freedom can be defined as the ability to choose without undue restraint and within the limits of the acceptable. The impact of this definition can be seen most clearly by examining the culture of the Luba, an African ethnic group in Zaire, the country formerly known as Congo-Kinshasa.[1]

Among the Luba, one of the principal conditions for pursuing independence, or freedom, is a person's claim to memberhip in a family or a larger descent group. From birth, members of the family are educated for self-reliance, and the choices they make in life can lead to achievements in farming, trade and raising livestock. They may even pursue new avenues for achievement.

There is no such thing as unlimited freedom for the Luba. Successful choices bring wealth, but true success is achieved when the accomplishments of one promote the welfare of many. Therefore, the search for independence and the allocation of assets are grounded in the spirit of sharing. Wealth is primarily a means for building the family, strengthening the community and holding political office.

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1 Luba ethnicity consists of several branches which claim common origin from the Luba Empire of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Vansina, 1968, pp. 74-77). This essay describes the Luba of Eastern Kasai (once known as Baluba Lubilanji) whose homeland is watered on the east by the River Lubilanji. The 1970 census of Zaire estimated their number at over one million people (Mulago, 1973, p. 16, quoting *Le Progrès* of August 8-9 and 11, 1970).

Membership Rights

Three types of membership traditionally are vital to a Luba person. They are membership in a family, membership in a lineage and membership in a chiefdom. Each membership provides the individual with a claim to the fundamental rights of inheritance, land use and political participation, claims which are recognized on the basis of the legitimacy and seniority of the individual.

Since these rights are integral parts of what it means to be free, the Luba are very sensitive to, and resentful of, situations that are likely to interfere with the exercise of these rights. One such situation is illegitimate birth.[2] On the other hand, legitimate birth confers full-fledged membership in the family, the father's lineage and the chiefdom of which this lineage is a constitutive segment (Mukenge, 1967, chap. 1).

Family Membership

By legitimate birth, an individual automatically becomes a member of the nuclear family, which may be monogamous or polygamous, depending on whether the husband has one or more wives.

Each member of the family occupies a different status. The man of the house, who is husband and father, occupies the highest status. The wives follow in the chronology of their marriages to him, and the first wife enjoys the highest status among her co-wives. Her status is made even greater by the fact that she is generally the one selected to serve the spirit of the husband's paternal grandmother, *Nkambwa*, who is the guardian spirit of the family. The first wife commands the respect of her co-wives, which they express by, among other things, calling her "mother" or "big sister" (Mukenge, 1967, pp. 14-17).

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2 A birth is legitimate if the two parents are married to each other according to the rules and practices of Luba society. The marriage is an alliance between the groom's family and the bride's family, sealed with the consent of the two partners in the presence of two witnesses, one for each party. The agreement becomes concrete with the transfer of some wealth — generally money and goats — from the groom's family to the bride's family and the acceptance of this bridewealth by the latter family. Children born from such a union, and only they, are considered legitimate children.

It is a parental duty for a father to ensure that his sons will be able to get married when they reach the age to do so. Leaving some inheritance when they die is, therefore, a major preoccupation of Luba fathers. The Luba marry by transferring some wealth of money and goats to the family of the bride. It is ideal among the Luba that the wealth received by a family when one of its female members marries be used to procure a wife for a male member. This ideal is generally respected. Therefore, the most reliable form of inheritance Luba fathers prefer to leave for their sons are daughters who, by marrying, will bring wealth that their brothers can invest in their own marriages. The females whose bridewealth is used to this end are called *mishika*.

Membership in a family makes a Luba person eligible for inheritance, but seniority may require this person to wait longer than several siblings or cousins before receiving that inheritance. On the other hand, hard work may enable a Luba man to acquire the bridewealth necessary for his own marriage, and this event may occur sooner than if he had to wait for a sister to find a husband first.

Illegitimate children are not entitled to *mishika*, nor are they eligible to inherit from their fathers. Such children are the objects of various verbal abuses and may be pejoratively referred to as *bidimenena* or "wild plants" or *balelela mu masela*, "born in the grass." They often face total rejection. Many Luba parents also reject their daughters who become pregnant out of wedlock, and the only chance a woman in this situation has to reestablish normal relationships with her relatives is to be married to the baby's father. As a matter of fact, pressure is always exerted on the man and his family to this effect.

Along with the horrors of illegitimacy go the glories of legitimacy. The Luba attach a high value to virginity, marriage and faithfulness. They take pride in being known as sons and daughters of their fathers. Indeed, the first element, other than his own name, by which a Luba person introduces himself is his father's name. "Who is your father?" is the first question that anyone who claims membership in a lineage is asked to answer. And to stress eligibility, he or she would proudly declare, "*Ndi mukuna ku dikasa*" (Literally, *I am a properly cultivated plant and not just a weed*, which means, "I am his legitimate child.")

Lineage Membership

Through legitimate birth, a Luba person is a member not only of his father's household but also of a hierarchy of descent groups founded by his father's paternal ascendants. The most immediate is the paternal extended family, which can embrace as many as five generations: adult siblings and their first degree parallel cousins from the father's side; their fathers and paternal aunts; their grandparents; their children; and for male siblings and cousins, their grandchildren.

The interaction, actual as well as mystical, among the members of the extended family involves the living and the dead, the born and the unborn. For instance, a man's failure to fulfill his obligations to his father's or grandfather's spirit may cause his child to become sick or give birth to children that do not survive. The members of the various nuclear families composing an extended family are tied to one another through a network of obligatory presents of bridewealth from the marriages of female members. Claims to such presents are among the membership rights that children may or may not inherit from their fathers, depending on their social status, which includes their legitimacy.

The next significant membership group based on paternal filiation is the so-called *diku*. No single individual and no other social group in traditional Luba society has the privilege of owning land. Being a recognized member of a *diku* means having free and inalienable access to the land owned by the group. Members have the right to use the land and to dispose of the fruit of their work freely but not to sell the land itself. Not having access to land for agriculture, hunting, fishing and gathering is the worst curse imaginable, because land is indispensable for survival.

For the Luba, therefore, independence without a homeland is nonsense. An independent person knows his homeland, identifies himself by it and has the right to use its natural resources by farming, hunting, fishing and gathering without undue interference from anybody. A stranger and, even worse, a slave do not have such privileges. To defend the lands of one's lineage is to protect one's own freedom. Many intergroup conflicts have land at stake. Colonization, with its measures for land expropriation, is an act of enslavement to be fought against as such.

Membership in a Chiefdom

The largest group to which a person belongs by birth, at least in traditional Luba society, is the chiefdom. Large or small, each chiefdom is sovereign and is divided into several segments, each having its own headman who is selected from among its socially and personally qualified members. The segment headman is subordinate to the authority of the paramount chief and represents his segment in the chief's council.

For some segments, their only form of political participation is to be governed by a headman who is one of their own and be represented by him in the chief's council. Other segments have additional functions. Some segments provide the chiefs who rule over the entire chiefdom, while others have qualified members who enjoy the exclusive privilege of investing the chiefs with power (Kanyinda, 1968, p. 42).

The Luba terms for these three political segments are *bifuku naka* (functionless segments), *bakalenge* (the rulers) and *babilolo* (the power distributors). The descent criteria for these three categories are based on the rank of the mother in a polygamous family. The first wife occupies a higher status than her co-wives. For this reason, her children are the social elders of their half-brothers and sisters, regardless of their chronological age.

According to oral tradition, functionless segments belong to two categories: some are believed to be the offspring of people the Luba found in the area at the time of their immigration from the Luba Empire, while others descend from refugees of war who reportedly came to the chiefdom, long after its establishment, in search of protection or good lands for cultivation (Kanyinda, 1968, p. 15). The rulers, on the other hand, are descendants of the chiefdom founder who were born of the first wife, and the power distributors are his descendants by his other wives. However, while a person may be born into a political segment that is entitled to rule, the turn for that segment to accede to power may not occur in one individual's lifetime because of the effects of seniority.

The Luba resent situations which prevent them from participating fully in the political process, and some of this resentment can be explained historically. Often in the past, when contenders to the throne of the chiefdom could not agree on whose turn it was to rule at a particular time, some eligible families would secede

and form a separate segment with the frustrated contender as their leader. Some migrated to foreign lands, such as among the Lulwa to the west and the Kanyok to the south, where they attempted to recreate autonomous Luba villages. The colonial administration later reinforced this tendency with its policy of sending independent-minded leaders into exile and placing them in separate settlements (Kanyinda, 1968, p. 91).

Education for Self-Reliance

Young people among the Luba are educated in basic concepts of self-reliance to achieve independence or freedom, both for themselves personally and for the community as a whole. They learn these principles from theory, expressed through proverbs, and from practical teaching.

Basic Concepts

Central to the Luba notion of achievement are the concepts of strength and self-reliance. These qualities enable each person to become somebody.

Strength. The multi-faceted quality of strength includes strength of the body, the strength to work, the strength to face hardship, the strength to think and the strength to procreate.

The Luba word for strength is *bukole*, a derivative of the verb *kukola*, to stiffen, to harden, to become strong and the grow up. They also distinguish between several sorts of strength. One, *bukole bwa mubidi*, which means health or strength of the body, conditions all the others. Closely related is the ability to work, *bukole bwa mudimu*. The Luba being essentially agriculturalists, the ability to work means the capacity to farm land, *bukole bwa budimi*. Relying on the low technology of the hoe as the dominant instrument of work, farming is a very difficult occupation in Luba villages. It requires another kind of strength that the Luba call the strength of the heart, *bukole bwa moyo*. This means courage, persistence and endurance. Also needed for success is strength of the mind, *bukole bwa lungenyi*, meaning intelligence, ingenuity and wisdom. The emphasis placed on procreation as a form of achievement means that the Luba also count virility among the necessary strengths of an achiever. Called *bukole bwa balume*, this particular type of strength means the strength of manhood. The equivalent for a woman is the

ability to conceive and to give birth to healthy children, which is *lulelu* or fertility.

These various types of strength are secured through communal actions, such as sharing meals, child care, protection against evil doers, care for the sick and the dying, and ancestral veneration (Bamuinikile, 1975, pp. 26-28).

Self-Reliance. A quality that results from strength is the ability to provide for the self by standing upon one's own feet and by having the pride to do so. The Luba word for self-reliance is *kanyingu waditanta*. *Kanyingu* is a diminutive of *nyingu*, the clay jar in which Luba women carry water from the spring. *Waditanta* is the imperative tense of the verb *kuditanta*, to try on one's own to do something. In its restricted sense, the expression *kanyingu waditanta* applies to young girls who learn how to fetch water from the spring, and it refers to teaching them to put the water jar on their heads by themselves.

An example of the application of the Luba philosophy of self-reliance in recent history is contained in the constitution of the short-lived Autonomous South-Kasai State (1961-1963). Article 15 of their constitution is entitled *Debrouillez-vous*, which means "Fend for yourself." It was purposely written into the constitution for the benefit of Luba refugees of war from other provinces of the Congo in order to disillusion them from counting on the state for meeting their needs for food, housing, income and other things. The article tells them, instead: "This land is yours, you are at home, provide for yourselves."

Teaching by Theory and Practice

The virtues of strength and self-reliance are taught through proverbs and by practical activities.

Proverbs. The need to face hardship in farming with courage has given rise to the following proverb which is used to teach courage in hardship in any sector of life:

> *Panu mpasangana pakole*
> *Masela ne bilunda mbisangana bimena*
>
> Hardship on earth preceded man
> The tall grass and the short grass preceded the farmer

This proverb refers to two types of grass that the Luba farmer confronts each season. One type, *masela*, is tall, bushy, wet in

the morning hours and has sharp blades. The other type, *bilunda*, is short and small but resists the hoe.

Some proverbs are especially designed to discourage dependency. The following four are among them (Bamuikile, 1975, pp. 34-36).

1. *Kapulukusu nyonyi mavwanga*
Keba biuma ubake biebe
Kuyi kuindila bia mukwebe

Kapulukusi, you animal with disorderly hair
Procure the wealth it takes for you to marry
Do not wait for your relative to procure it for you

2. *Kulela kwa mukwenu*
Ki nkwebe kulela

Your brother's progeny is not quite yours

3. *Bidi mwetu tente*
Anu kebe pebe

Saying, "There is plenty at home" does you no good unless some of it belongs to you personally

4. *Kwa mukulu kantu*
Kwa mwakunyi kantu
Nanku bulunda bwadisanga

Only if each owns some property, then can friendship between two brothers be harmonious.

In the first proverb, a bachelor who waits for a brother to provide him with the bridewealth he needs in order to get married is compared to a lazy bat that sleeps in daytime while everyone else is at work. The Luba value marriage, but marriage is not possible unless one has the wealth to pay the bride's family. The bridewealth given for a marriage may be a product of one's own work or a gift from a brother. The above proverb is designed to discourage the temptation that some people might have to wait for a brother, an uncle or a cousin to provide for them. Rather, it exhorts people to fend for themselves.

The message contained in the second, third and fourth proverbs is similar to that of the first one. The spirit of brotherly love and self-identification with the interest of the village community teaches one to rejoice in the accomplishments of others.

These proverbs warn one against falling into the other extreme by taking pride in the accomplishments of others without caring about one's own contribution. Thus, the individual is not expected to dilute into the community or become a dependent or ward of the community. Each person must preserve and affirm his individuality by his accomplishments. To rejoice in the success of a brother — his progeny and his wealth — is expected, but to relax and be contented with it without striving to bring one's own contribution to the community is condemned. Laziness is reproved and the lazy man is reminded that daylight is there for man to work and not, like the bat, to sleep.

Practical Teaching. In addition to proverbs, the achievement motive is taught to children when they are young by making them participate in the subsistence activity in which the parents are involved, such as farming, marketing the produce, repairing houses, tending goats and so on. Before the age of puberty, young men are encouraged to learn the basic survival skills such as setting traps to catch rodents and birds. They must be able to weave and sell mats, providing for some of their needs by themselves. In order to qualify for marriage, the young man must build himself a house and maintain his own field.

The desire to achieve is also taught through praising the hard worker and the achiever. When a child performs a task well or brings in the little fruit of his little work, the parents thank him, call him by his names of praise and encourage him to keep on doing good work. This they do by saying, "*Nanku shobe*," which means, "That is the way, brave man." They then reward him with some gratuity, which in most instances may consist of a meal containing some meat. While serving the meat to the child for work well done, the father will say:

> *Mukwatshi wa mudimu mmukalenge*
> *Nansha kabwa wamushipela*
>
> He who works is a king
> (If you cannot afford a goat)
> Treat him at least with a dog.

Goat meat is a delicacy in Luba society. The goat is an animal of honor and a symbol of wealth. A goat is slaughtered for meat only at very special occasions such as a wedding or the return of a relative who has been gone for many years. At the opposite

end of the ladder stands the dog, a despised animal that eats human excrement and whose meat spoils in a matter of hours. Because meat is scarce, some people, especially the youngsters, eat dog in times of despair. Meat is rare in Luba villages. Serving a child some meat for a good thing he has done is a treat. It tells him, "You are special." The above proverb is equivalent to saying, "For a hard worker, do something special, even if only a token."

Achievement

Prosperity through achievement is the third daily concern in Luba life, and an achiever is a creator of wealth. The Luba traditionally seek independence and wealth by practicing extractive activities such as farming, as well as by trade and by raising livestock. If, for some reason, these traditional ways fail to bring prosperity, the Luba achiever tries new ways that may be available locally or searches for new ways by migrating to other lands.

Extractive Activities

The Luba derive their subsistence and wealth primarily from farming (Beguin, 1960, pp. 125-191). However, farming is supplemented to a large extent by hunting, fishing and gathering. Access to land, which makes these activities possible, is determined by descent, as the majority of Luba men live in the villages of their fathers on communal lands bequeathed to them by their ancestors. They and their wives share the rights to dwell on or cultivate any portion of the lands that belong freely to members of that lineage, without asking permission of anyone. Foreigners, other than spouses, must obtain permission from the elders of the lineage on whose lands they desire to live or establish any other use prior to any actual operation.

The Luba practice agriculture in fields of the savannah, along river banks and in gardens around their houses. The person who owns a field or a garden also owns what is produced from the land and can dispose of it at will. The Luba generally divide their crops into three parts: quantities for food, sales and seeds. In pre-colonial times, the village headman organized a collection of produce to pay as a tribute to the paramount chief.

The freedom to use ancestral lands extends to hunting, fishing and gathering. Members of a lineage and their wives need no

permission from anyone to practice any form of these activities on the lands of their lineage. The game, the catches and the products they gather are theirs. However, they must declare to the paramount chief every large game killed and obey the customary rule of sharing, which entitles the chief to one-half of any large game killed within the confines of the chiefdom. The same rule applies to animals killed in collective hunting by setting fires, which is the only one organized by the chief. Likewise, the chief is entitled to one-half of the catch from river damming, which is a form of fishing organized only by the chief.

Here, as with the crops, quantities turned over to the chief serve three functions: to feed him and his family, to enable him to organize popular banquets for the masses of citizens, and to entertain visitors and travelers. Luba villages have no inns, and travelers stay with their relatives or, in the absence of relatives, at the chief's court. In this manner, the chief returns to the population part of their tribute. The Luba also have a rhetorical question specifically designed to remind rulers of this duty:

> *Kudi kufuma mulambu*
> *Kakwena nzala anyi?*
>
> The tribute payers have to eat, too, don't they?

Trade

All movable goods are the object of sales on Luba markets. The majority are of local origin, but a few are products of long-distance trade. The Luba freely participate in selling at the marketplace and in long-distance trade.

Selling at the marketplace. The institution of the marketplace goes hand in hand with that of the chieftancy. Where there is a chief, there also is a marketplace; the greater the chief, the more important the marketplace. Different markets in the same region meet alternatively so that people may attend as many as they wish in a cycle.

According to oral tradition, the Luba once had a four-day week, but it falls short of indicating the names of those days. Under the impact of colonization, the Luba adopted the seven-day week, the first day of which coincides with Monday and the seventh with Sunday. The most important markets, now held on

Saturdays and Sundays, are associated with Christian missions or colonial administrative centers (Bamuinikile, 1975, pp. 51-52).

Access to the marketplace is free. An officer of the chief, with a variable number of assistants, is in charge of maintaining peace and order, and traders pay him for the account of the chief. Prices are set freely by the seller, but they are usually lower at the end of the market day than at the beginning. By then, the sellers are afraid of having to carry their merchandise back home unsold. Prices are not necessarily quoted equally to each potential buyer. The custom is for the seller to ask a price that is higher than the one actually hoped for, while the serious buyer purposely offers one that is lower. This mutual exaggeration is expected to generate bargaining between the two partners, resulting in an agreement somewhere between the two extremes.

Long-Distance Trade. From distant places, Luba traders bring into their communities a few products such as salt, eel, other varieties of smoked fish, a type of edible caterpillar known as *mansamba* and, in the past, raffia cloth as well.

The regions in which these various items are produced often require traveling for several days from Lubaland on foot, but trains and trucks are also used in certain regions today. Traders must overcome obstacles of language and customs, because eel is produced in a Kete-speaking area, *mansamba* in a Tchokwe-speaking area, and raffia cloth in a Songwe-speaking area. These different ethnic groups also may have different customs in buying and selling.

The Luba adopted different strategies of accommodation to deal with these problems, such as learning the language of their trading partners, establishing permanent friendships with some of them, and learning their business customs. A frequently-cited proverb is designed to encourage the latter course of action:

Waya ku Bakuba
Kwanji kuteya
Wamona Bakuba
Muteyateyabo

You, visitor to Kubaland,
Set no traps
Until you observe
How Kuba people set theirs.

Raising Livestock

Most of the objects of long-distance trade are perishables, intended for resale on local markets. They are not permanent symbols of enrichment. Furthermore, the Luba do not raise cattle, and cattle are not a source or manifestation of wealth. In contrast, livestock, such as chickens, ducks, goats, sheep and pigs are raised both as means and symbols of enrichment.

Of these animals, the chicken and the goat are the most culturally valued. The Luba realize the meagerness of incomes that can be derived from selling crops in a low-technology society. The ideal is for one who aspires to become rich to begin with any productive activity at hand, whether it be agriculture, fishing or weaving mats. The next step is to sell the products from these activities and invest the proceeds into the purchase of a chicken for raising. The expectation is that this chicken will produce more chickens , enabling its owner to acquire ducks and pigeons as well. By multiplying, these fowls will one day enable him to buy a goat. From one goat, he will go to two, three and many more. His interest in raising livestock will be extended to sheep and pigs. By then, he will have become somebody.

Trying New Avenues

The Luba are well aware of the fact that they are increasingly unable to bring about progress by relying solely on old ways. They are mentally prepared to try new ways, and the following maxims encourage people in this direction:

1. *Biakala bishile bipiabipia mwaba*

   Let the old things make space for the new ones

2. *Baya waya*
   Washala washadilamu

   Move with the movers
   Otherwise you stay behind forever.

Animated with this spirit, the Luba unreservedly embraced the *paysannat* system introduced by the colonial administration, which included regrouping fields and standardizing production methods, whenever it proved more profitable than traditional methods of farming. They adopted labor for wages and formal educational systems as new ways of life and more powerful forces

for social mobility, even though opportunities to use these methods in Lubaland are limited.

On the other hand, when traditional sources of wealth are effective, every villager does not succeed equally. In fact, angry relatives and envious neighbors are often cited in divination as causes of misfortunes. When people feel that their individual progress is retarded by their relatives, they may equate living in their homeland with death:

Mumwe mumwe kamwena mulela wa moyo

In-house conflicts never begot a living child

Long before Belgian occupation, the Luba learned to take their chances living among other people (Vansina, 1968, p. 78), but colonization intensified and expanded the movement. Since then, education and wage labor joined extractive activities, trade and raising livestock as possibilities open to Luba people, even if it means migrating to foreign lands. Everyone has the choice of embarking upon any of these avenues, and today, there are Luba people in practically all parts of Zaire and around the world, searching for opportunities to prosper. Luba society encourages every member to do so and praises the successful achiever.

Allocation of Assets

Accumulating wealth is not an end in itself for the Luba. It is a means for improving the human condition, more particularly the family. For those who are politically inclined, it is, in addition, a key to office.

Building the Family. In the Luba philosophy of independence through achievement, the ideal is that the achiever uses his wealth to build the family. A family is built when a man marries and begets children with his wife or wives. It is the ideal of each Luba achiever to unite, through personal effort, the necessary bridewealth for his marriage, but the ideal goes far beyond the self. A true achiever procures wives not only for himself but for his relatives as well. As a matter of fact, the number of wives procured for relatives is the accomplishment that is stressed most frequently during ceremonies consecrating achievement.

The achiever contributes to family building through sharing his meals as well. For the Luba, eating alone is a vice. Each person shares his meals with relatives and partakes in theirs, regardless of

whether or not they have participated in food production. He is often reminded of the proverb about sharing food:

Biadima umwe
Biadia bangi

Produced by one
But consumed by many.

Still another form of sharing expected of an achiever is with that person's ancestors. The Luba believe that a man's abilities to work and procreate are gifts from his ancestors. In response, he is expected to share with them his first fruits at each stage in the achievement process by turning over to them first crops, first chickens, first goat and first wife acquired through personal efforts. The elder who receives these presents on behalf of the ancestors blesses the donor, thus enabling him to pursue his productive activities with strength and optimism in the future. He blesses the wife as well and returns her to her husband, wishing them abundant progeny.

This type of sharing is also affected by seniority and legitimacy. As previously explained, the children of the first wife are the social elders of their half-brothers and sisters, regardless of their chronological age. In this capacity, they enjoy the privilege of replacing the father in order to receive the tributes of first fruits that his childen owe for their ability to work and to procreate. Only legitimate children are usually considered for this privilege.

Running for Political Office. The highest level of achievement, one reached by only a few, is to become the head of one's chiefdom segment or to ascend the throne of the entire chiefdom. Only members of chiefdom segments believed to have descended from the chiefdom founder's first wife are authorized to rule over the chiefdom. Only members of segments believed to trace their ascendance to his other wives are vested with the authority to confer power on the successful candidates. All others are excluded from both powers.

Ascending the throne of the chiefdom is not automatic. Only the most qualified are designated by their families to run; only the rich have the courage to do so and are taken seriously. The process is very long and costly, and no single individual can afford it by himself. Generally, an entire extended family contributes to the cost over several generations and even then, only a few make

it. Sometimes, frustrated contenders attempt either to take power by force. Others secede and, like the frustrated members of excluded segments, migrate to foreign lands.

Conclusion

The meaning of independence, or freedom, in Luba culture is inextricably linked to fundamental rights, the development of personal qualities and the choices that individuals make.

The rights of Luba man are based on legitimate membership in his family, his lineage and his chiefdom. A free man is a strong man, a hard worker, a provider and a family builder. He is animated with the spirit of achievement and enjoys freedom of action in his undertakings. He is also a creator of wealth who enjoys its rewards.

However, even though individuals have fundamental rights, their enjoyment of those rights in some instances may be either deferred or otherwise limited. Freedom is the ability to stand with others and, together, face hardship with courage; to be a contributor rather than a liability on society; and to pursue the common good. Because of this philosophy and its many manifestations in the lives of the Luba, independence and the spirit of community appear to be coterminous.

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